



COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION & LABOR
REPUBLICANS

COMMITTEE STATEMENT

**Opening Statement of Rep. Russ Fulcher (R-ID), Republican Leader
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Human Services
“An Ounce of Prevention: Investments in Juvenile Justice Programs”
September 8, 2022**

(As prepared for delivery)

“Supporting America’s young people and keeping our communities safe are priorities Republicans have long supported. Federal policies have focused for years on empowering local efforts to place at-risk youth on the right path. In fact, Republicans shepherded the last reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act to reflect those priorities. In that reauthorization we took steps to improve the juvenile justice system with legislation that promotes public safety through prevention efforts and gives state and local leaders more flexibility to meet the needs of at-risk youth while also implementing transparency and accountability measures.

“As we heard during our last hearing on the juvenile justice system, juvenile crime is on a downward trajectory. A witness stated that the number of youths arrested since 1997 has declined by 74 percent. My home state of Idaho is following these trends, especially on property-related crimes. This is good news and tells us we need to stay focused on prevention efforts.

“And we know prevention efforts are crucial to helping at-risk youth avoid entanglement with the juvenile system. Intervening early reduces the likelihood of this happening. Once a young person has one ‘run in,’ they are far more likely to have another. That’s why prevention is key.

“Programs at the state and local levels, will help secure brighter futures for these young people. We must promote positive and holistic youth development programs. Young people who have their educational, relational, emotional, spiritual, and physical needs met are far less likely to participate in illicit activity. These kinds of programs are best developed, implemented, and run at the local level, utilizing community partners, including those in the faith community, to address the unique needs of the youth in that community.

“We must do a better job utilizing public-private partnerships. Local educators, social workers, faith-based providers, and community leaders—not Washington bureaucrats—should lead efforts on the front lines of this youth crisis. Community involvement utilizes the expertise out there, yielding better results for our nation’s young people, without further burdening schools— which needs to focus on education.

“We must also give young people as many opportunities as possible. Work experience, for example, is one of the most effective ways to set at-risk youth on the right path. Career and technical programs give youth opportunities to set them up for success. Our community colleges, with their structured programs and work with local employers, offer paths for young people at risk and as a second chance for those who have gotten into trouble.

“Our witness today, Father Boes, will discuss the importance of looking at the unique needs of the children involved, providing support to schools that help address the needs of at-risk students, and putting those students on a path to success. I look forward to hearing more about ‘Boys Town’, its work, and partnership with schools to address these issues.

“Thank you—to Father Boes and the other witnesses for coming today, I look forward to the testimony, and I yield back.”

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